# The Infinite Loops - DC Comics Loops

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The World's Finest heroes enter the Infinite Loops.

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# Primary Anchor Candidate

Before: Yggdrasil, the world tree and divine computer that makes up reality, was badly damaged. The Admins responsible for looking after Yggdrasil's systems had to put several universes on a repeating Loop in an attempt to fix this damage. At first, there were only seven universes Looping, but eventually more and more problems arose, and more universes were required to Loop. The branch containing the heroes of DC Comics was one of these.

However, something isn't going to according to plan.

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Attempting Loop Activation

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt 1 using primary Anchor candidate:

Something was wrong. Desperately wrong. He could feel it all the way down to his bones.

He was supposed to have perfect memory, total recall of everything he ever saw. But that didn't explain the spate of memories he didn't have, a whole other life filled with strange people he'd never met and skills he didn't have. He'd never flown, why did he think he could fly? The most he could do was leap very high, and that was it.

Clark Kent, or as he tended to call himself on the job, Superman, tried to ignore that, and focus on more important matters. Like the crazed madman holding Ms. Lane prisoner. However, at present he was more worried about that ominous green-glowing device the madman had near his person. Just looking at it was making him feeling uneasy.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked. There was something cruel in the man's eyes, something that Superman didn't like. Something familiar.

"Oh" the man said, in an entirely out of place Irish accent, "just a man preparin' to make myself th' master o' the world."

"You'll never get away with this, Luthor!" Lois Lane yelled.

Lu^hor? He k*ew that nam8 from somewh-3458548~["...

ATTEMPT FAILED

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY AGAIN?

"No" Morpheus, god of dreams and already irritated admin, sighed, "I would not like to try again. I want it to work the first time. Like it's supposed to."

He stopped, taking several deep breaths, trying to get the rising anger under control. It was okay, he told himself, teething problems were to be expected. This was entirely plausible. Not everyone could have the same luck trying to get the multiverse fixed again.

"Luck" he muttered. It was definitely luck that the problems afflicting Yggdrasil were spreading, that more universes needed to be put on an infinite loop to fix it, and it was just his damn luck he got saddled with a problem universe.

And Hephaestus had promised everyone he'd been trying to fix the bugs, too.

Morpheus reclined in his chair, staring at the screen for long minutes.

Eventually, he sighed. He had agreed to do this job, long and difficult though it was likely to be. He wasn't going to give up, no matter what the problem was.

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt 2 using Primary Anchor candidate

His memories were practically screaming at him that something was wrong. But he couldn't put his finger on it. He'd tried asking the Legion of Superheroes if they were able to help. They had shown him the greatest scanning machine known to the 30th century.

It had scanned him extensively, and claimed there was nothing wrong with his memories.

But despite this reassurance, Clark Kent had gone through his childhood in Smallville feeling uncertain. He was fairly certain something was wrong, though he just wasn't sure what. Little things that didn't quite make sense. Like that Lex Luthor character. He couldn't help but shake the feeling he'd met him somewhere before.

And then he'd reached Metropolis, the City of Tomorrow. He'd changed his name to Superman, gotten a job working as a reporter for the Daily Planet, and spent most of his time either thwarting dastardly villains or saving Lois Lane, who seemed to him to be almost suicidal in her behaviour. And why was she so obsessed with marrying him?

He also couldn't shake the odd feeling that he was supposed to be playing along with the insanity somehow, like making Jimmy Olsen turn into a giant turtle, or a human porcupine...

Then he met Lex Luthor again, Lex Luthor who blamed Superboy for some accident of his youth that Superman couldn't honestly remember, and chose to get vengeance by attacking Superman's girlfriend, Lois Lane.

Apparently gently explaining to Luthor that Lois wasn't his girlfriend wasn't going to take. And what's worse it just made the woman more determined to marry him.

This most recent time took the cake though. Somehow, Lois Lane had gotten in touch with a genius scientist, acquired superpowers and tried to arrest Lex Luthor. Superman decided not to dwell on that one.

The rescue had been standard. Free Lois, fight robots, get zapped by laser ray, reveal important act of sabotage which made robots and most of the lab blow up. He'd gotten Lois to safety, then gone back to find Lex Luthor. The man had been standing by his machinery, swearing revenge. Something exploded as Superman got close. Not disastrously so, but enough to send Lex flying.

Superman quickly moved to try and assist his downed foe. Then he recoiled.

"Yes, look" Lex Luthor groaned, "look at what you've made of me, Superboy!"

The machine had damaged his face. But rather than horrific burn marks, it had just revealed Lex's face... was a mask. Slowly, with the odd wince of p#in, the man stood up. He grasped the flaps of the mask, and pulled. And pulled.

Long ginger locks somehow appeared from underneath the m&ask, as the absolute last person Superman had been expecting to see glowered at him.

"There never *was* a Lex Luthor! It was I, Lana Lang, all al87£3103...

ATTEMPT FAILED

Morpheus just stared blankly at the screen.

"What did I just see?"

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt 3 using Primary Anchor candidate

His name was Clark Kent, and he was afraid.

Things had been going well the last few years. He'd moved to Metropolis, a lovely shining city, filled with cheerful, friendly people.

He'd gotten a job at the Daily Star, a renowned newspaper, he'd made a career, he'd been good, he'd helped people.

And deep inside him, he'd felt it. Lurking, waiting. Occasionally loitering on the edges of memory waiting to spring forth.

It had gotten worse since he met Lois Lane, that fiery reporter for the Daily Planet. That had been something about her that just seemed... familiar, as if he knew her somehow.

Which was ridiculous, he told himself. But then again... he was living proof that stranger things could happen.

So here he was, in Suicide Slums, investigating a story, still very much afraid. Only, he wasn't afraid for himself, he was afraid for the people who'd surrounded him and were now planning to m&g him, and Lois Lane. She was cold and steely, reacting to their threats with a practiced indifference.

Then he felt someone s%$b him. The world started to spin as he fell over.

"Clark!" he heard Lois yell. How strange, he thought. And here he'd been thinking she didn't care.

And then, he realised he was saying something, by reflex he'd tried so long to bury.

" *Free the might from fleshy mire,*

*Boil the blood in heart of fire!* "

Unbidden winds began to roar, and flames began to dance around his hands and his feet, as he slowly staggered upward.

" *Gone, gone, the heart of man!*

*Rise the Demon-* "

There was a familiar feeling of being rip^$~ away from his b0dy, as the final word was finished by something far worse than he.

" *ETRI* -53'/#}}}

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop activation attempt 4 using Primary Anchor candidate

"So, discussing the situation in Georgia, if I might..." someone was talking. He must have dozed off. But discussions about the political situation weren't interesting to him. Just because he was Premier now didn't mean he enjoyed-

Then, he heard it. Far away, on the outskirts of the city. Someone was in trouble. He stood up, every eye in the room turning towards him.

"Excuse me, gentlemen" he said, politely, as he made his way toward the window, "I'll be back in a moment."

And with that, he opened it, and soared out into the bracing air, flying rapidly over the streets of Stalingr-

No, no this was wr*#~. All of it was wrong. He wasn't sup^osed to be in Russia! And he certainly wasn't supposed to b-8743######

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Morpheus frowned. He grit his teeth as he tried to make sense of the read-outs. Where had that coding come from? How had Etrigan and Superman's histories wound up getting merged?

Carefully, and with all due caution, he set to work trying to fix another glitch.

Morpheus was not one for smiling, or really for any overt displays of joy. Serious was a word normally used to describe him (well, provided one ignored the various swear words his fellow Olympians tended to use). However, at the moment, he was seriously considering breaking out a smirk.

Several hours of hard work going over Superman's coding, weeding out any possible error that could possibly occur, like for example information on two different beings bleeding into one another, had finally finished. He was confident now that he'd fixed every possible error he could find. And yet... the statistical readout on the chances of Loop success was still only at eighty-seven percent.

He'd checked three times, and couldn't find any specific glaring error. Reluctantly he'd had to accept the possibility of checking later. Four failed attempts meant he was likely to be getting angry calls soon, asking why he hadn't gotten his universe Looping yet, and whether he needed any help. He didn't have the time to look through every single particle of data looking for potential errors, he just needed to keep his universe from collapsing.

But it still stung at his pride.

He allowed the new Loop attempt to begin.

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Yggdrasil Log: Activation attempt 5 using Primary Anchor candidate

Clark Kent calmly made his way through the offices of the Daily Planet, occasionally dodging a member of staff rushing by, being extra careful to try and trip over his shoes once or twice. He wasn't exactly happy with pretending to be a klutz, but it did certainly stop anyone from looking too close, at which point they might have realised he was in fact the increasingly famous Superman.

"Afternoon" he said, reaching the desk of the Planet's star.

"Hey, Clark" the young blonde woman smiled. "Have fun in Ecuador?"

He had to admit, there was something about Chloe Sullivan that was just unique, even if she did have a tendency to endanger her life on a level he'd not seen on anyone else, not even his fellow super-heroes.

"Not as much as I thought I would" he admitted. She kept smiling.

"Great." And with that she went straight back to typing.

"Something wrong?" Clark asked. She bit her lip.

"Well, I do love chatting Clark, but this gal reporter has a serious deadline to beat, or otherwise Perry's going to start breathing fire at yours truly."

"Busy, then?"

She nodded. "Busy. Sorry, Clark."

Nodding, Clark walked over towards his own desk, located opposite hers, and got to work himself. He also tried to ignore the way Chloe was blushing. Clark Kent and Chloe Sullivan were best friends and confidants, ever since he'd trust her with his secret identity so long ago. Messing with that would have been just wrong.

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Morpheus stared at the read-out. And stared. And stared. As it turned out, staring at the data didn't change the fact that Lois Lane wasn't there, instead replaced by her cousin from a variant Loop. He'd checked, and been told it wasn't an error, and there was nothing dangerous in her coding.

After a few minutes careful consideration, he decided to just go with it.

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Of all the enemies Superman had faced throughout his career, from Lex Luthor to Zod to Mongul to Doomsday, he would have said that Brainiac was, if not the absolute worst then definitely one of the worst. A mad hyper-intelligent computer, one armed with the full knowledge of entire species, and all it chose to do was destroy planets. It was one of the last things left of Krypton, and it was a twisted thing of nightmares.

And it wasn't until recently that he'd learned just how dangerous it was. At some point Brainiac had apparently spread itself through the Internet, subtly encoding it with subliminal programming designed to make mankind easier to control. And then it had finally struck.

Its first attack had been devastating, and insanely quick. His only option had been to fall back. Brainiac had followed relentlessly every step of the way. Everyone that had tried to fight it had gone missing.

Which led to now, as he ran, battered but not broken, through the empty streets of Metropolis. Somewhere not nearly far enough away, something made noises he didn't like the sounds of.

And then he heard it. A thousand voices calling his name at once.

"Kal-El."

He shut it out, and tried to focus. He knew Brainiac. The true Brainiac wasn't some program. He knew that. Brainiac always had a central node somewhere, a physical form. Why, he never bothered asking, but it definitely made things convenient.

He had a sickening suspicion it was probably Lex Luthor. The two had met more than once, and usually gotten along well. And it did make sense. His greatest human adversary mixed with his greatest alien adversary.

"Kal-El."

That was closer. Much closer. He stopped. Something was moving nearby. He took a deep breath, trying to remain as still as possible.

He looked up at the sky. It was hard to tell with the smoke in the sky, but he guessed it was somewhere around dawn. All he had to do was k33-k33- keep moving, and then he could work out a plan.

Then the wall nearby collapsed. Several dozen people, eyes glowing an ominous yellow, stared unpleasantly at him.

"Kal-El. Surrender."

He stood tall as his injuries could manage. "Never."

Without a word, the Brainiac-controlled citizens rushed him. And so he ran, rather than hurt any of the mad computer's victims. Before he could get more than half a block, more of them ap-**£59

He was surrounded by Brainiacs. Men, women, children of all sizes and ages and shapes, each staring unflinchingly at him.

"There is nowhere to flee, Kal-El. Brainiac is all."

He grimaced, as more and more Brainiacs (Brainioids? Brain drones? He couldn't help but wonder what Chloe would have been calling them at that moment) appeared.

Then, the crowd of Brainiacs began to part. A figure, obscured by the lack of light began to approach.

"Clark" the voice said, in an all-too familiar voice, only absent its normal warmth. Suddenly it felt like his knees were about to give out, and he collapsed, as Brainiac stared down at him through Chloe's eyes.

"No" he heard himself s{{, but something sounded wrong, as if it was distant. "Chloe, if you're in th-"

"Chloe Sullivan cannot hear you, Clark" Brainiac responded, in its cold monotone. "I have spent years inside this..." it examined its hands, "form. It has allowed me to gather unparalleled levels of data on humanity. And now I have what I require."

Her eyes began to glow a sinister red. "And no need of y-&&"'0000101

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Morpheus stared at the screen. Another failure. He stared at the door to his office, almost expecting a supremely angry Zeus to smash the door down any moment.

He checked, and then double checked his terminal.

"I don't understand" he muttered, "I don't understand. Where did that come from? Where did that come from?!"

From what he could understand, the error had just randomly occurred of its own free will. But that was insane, and preposterous, and utterly impossible. He'd checked Superman's data, he'd checked Sullivan's data. He'd gotten nothing.

For long moments he sat there, thinking on his problem, and a potential solution. And then, a hideous thought occurred to him. Perhaps, just perhaps, it was time to do something that went against his usual policies. Perhaps it was time to ask... for *help* .

" *No.* " He finally said. He could do this on his own. He just needed a little more...

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Yggdrasil activation attempt 6 using Fused Loop protocols with Anchor ****DATA NOT FOUND**** from Loop designated '***DATA NOT FOUND****':

ERROR: INFORMATION UNAVAILABLE AT PRESENT

ERROR: INFORMATION UNAVAILABLE AT PRESENT

PLEASE CONTACT NEAREST ADMIN ASSISTANT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Morpheus stared at the screen, trying to make sense of what had just happened. He waited. Nothing of the sort happened.

He massaged his temples, trying to avoid the incoming headache. He looked at the screen, as new message popped up, which made his heart sink.

PRIMARY ANCHOR CANDIDATE DEEMED UNVIABLE DUE TO SUCCESSIVE FAILURES.

MOVING TO ADDITIONAL PRIMARY ANCHOR CANDIDATES.

Before Morpheus could even react to the information, a long list of potential candidates lit up. It was fortunate, almost, the sheer number of suitable candidates his Loop had on offer, but at the same time immensely frustrating given there were just so many. He immediately saw the first choice, and scowled.

"No, thank you" he said. A few clicks, and the option was dismissed.

And on top of the wide variety of choice some of the primary candidates were either unstable, too badly glitched to even attempt, or prone to causing dangerous errors in their baseline, even before the possibility of something happening before the Loop had a chance to activate, which narrowed the choices considerably. However, Morpheus was absolutely certain as to who his second choice was. And fortunately, she was still available for choosing.

"Okay" he said. "Let's try her, then."

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Attempt 1) I like Golden Age Irish Lex Luthor for some reason. And yes, like the Mega Man Loops, the DC branch is having some difficultly getting up and running, albeit not on the same dramatic scale.

Attempt 2) Good question, Morpheus. But that's the Silver Age for you.

Attempt 3) SuperDemon. That's incredibly not good. (Based on a concept idea suggested by Grant Morrison back during the days of Final Crisis, a southern preacher merged with everyone's favourite rhyming demon.)

Attempt 4) Superman: Red Son, where Superman rules Russia, fighting a never-ending battle for Stalinism, Socialism, and the international expansion of the Warsaw pact. And Batman wears a fuzzy hat.

Attempt 5) Continuing Smallville's theme of horrible, horrible things happening to Chloe Sullivan. Morpheus isn't one for introspection, either the psychological or programming kind. It might actually help, though. And he almost had that one working, too.

Attempt 6) … Confused? The Loop that DC just had a Fused Loop with doesn't exist anymore. It did exist when the Fused Loop occurred, but now since then something happen to it. That's why Morpheus is reacting the way he is. To him, it's just another failed Loop attempt. But to us, there never was anything to see in the first place. For the record, it's the fault of the DC Branch that the attempt failed.

# Secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Attempting Loop Activation:

Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt 1 using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana, princess of the Amazons. The world knew her as Wonder Woman.

She had fought dozens of battles during her time in Man's World. She had made friends with the world's finest heroes, the Justice League which she was a founding member of. She had triumphed in bad situations time and time again.

And then the skies had turned red. The work of a creature by the name of the Anti-Monitor, a thing as old as the universe itself, born when a mad scientist dared to look at the beginning of time. It had been destroying world after world in a mad quest for even greater levels of power. And the world's heroes had tried to stop it. So many people, good and bad alike, had perished trying to stop it. Even Superman's cousin, killed in a valiant stand against it.

And now it was finally done. The creature was slain. Its remains had tumbled down and down into the abyss of the strange anti-matter universe it called home. It was time to I-*3^

" **I WILL NOT DIE!** " Came the hideous roar, one that somehow managed to reach her ears despite the fact that she was in space, " **I WILL NOT DIE BEFORE YOU!** "

She looked down, to see a hideous sight. The Anti-Monitor, alive, but also not. A hideous burning form, in the vague shape of its original body, glowing with all the frenzy of a star. A bright flare of energy leapt from its form, heading straight in Superman's direction.

Without even thinking, she moved in front of it. It burned, like nothing she had ever felt before, as if all of her was being torn apart at speeds she'd never felt. Like sh_ ^£s b[ing to*345256456227

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt * using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana, Princess of the Amazons. Most of the world knew her as Wonder Woman.

Presently, she was trying to come to terms with a strange terms of Man's World, the strange concept of "dating". She had tried asking her friends in the Justice League, but Hawkgirl and Black Canary's ideas just... didn't seem appealing for some strange reason, especially since Steven wasn't exactly fond of brawls.

Which meant that for their date they had wound up sitting on the roof of the Lincoln Memorial. And from all appearances it seemed to be going well, even if the wine didn't taste quite right for some reason. To her, it tasted vaguely muddy. But Steven hadn't complained, so she just put it down to something else. Nerves probably.

That probably explained the bizarre itching feeling she h8d. Steven was just grinning nervously again.

"What is it?" she asked. He just chortled.

"Nothing, nothing." There was a painful pause before he said, "Just... us people in 'Man's World' tend to go to restaurants for dates."

"Oh." The itching was getting worse. She couldn't honestly remembering feeling like this before.

"Not that I'm not enjoying this," Steve quickly said., "This is nice."

"Nice?"

"Yeah." Steve suddenly looked terrified., "No, wait, I mean-"

"It's alright," she quickly cut in. She was finding it difficult to even look at him all of a sudden. "Nice is... nice is good."

Steve laughed, nervously. Without even meaning to, she joined it.

"You alright?" he asked. She stared at him.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you're looking kinda pale, is all."

"I'm fine," she said. "Just... it's probably nerves."

The itching was getting worse. She shifted her weight, trying to see if moving would stop it. The itching just got worse, and worse.

Finally, she couln&t take it, and scratched at her hand. There was a really bizarre feeling, and she saw Steve turn pale. She looked down at where she'd scratched.

There were grey furrows in her skin. And the greyness was spreading, her skin going strangely pale and crumbling as it did, and her arm going increasingly numb.

She yelped, bu] n# sound came f772 her voice.

Her right arm suddenly turned completely grey, and then, as she watched, fell off. It shattered on contact with the roof. She tried screaming, only for everything to 5*0341[/

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop activation attempt % using Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana Prince. Officially a government aide working in Washington, D.C. on whatever assignment could be found for her. Her job intersected any number of offices and departments, making it difficult to keep track of in a paper trail.

Unofficially, she was someone entirely different. And her job was a lot easier to explain. She was a superhero.

And presently there appeared to be a creature rampaging through her adopted city. An odd-snake like creature, adorned with a set of horns. A Cerastes, she was reliably informed. A snake-like creature that tended to disguise itself underground and wait for food to come by.

Apparently someone had set it loose on the city, and it was having trouble with the tarmac, which was interfering with its attempts to eat people.

And now, it was angry and very hungry. Figuring out who could wait for later, she decided. Stopping it from eating anyone came first.

Clenching her fists, Diana stood her ground as the creature approached. Apparently the woman standing, glaring full-force at it had caught its attention.

This snake was about to find it had bit off more than it could chew.

Diana took a deep b&&th, and shouted to the top of her lungs.

" **SHAZAM!** "

A lightning bolt tore through the otherwise clear sky, striking her directly. With a roar of sound, Diana Prince was transformed, into the mighty Wonder Woman, the world's mightiest maiden, gifted with the power of seven gods.

& 32'##

And then the c0eatur was in front of her, jaws sp-*$###[[[289376...

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation attempt using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana Olafsdotter, princess of an isolated tribe of Norwegians.

At least, she presumed it was. A lot of her memories didn't feel right, and there was a massive gap where her childhood should have been, not to mention she kept getting the strangest feelings, glimpse of faces she couldn't properly recall, a life that wasn't hers. Feelings that had eventually led her to leave home, to explore the world outside of her tribe.

It was confusing, which didn't help when she was trying to fight someone called Minister Blizzard, a maniac who despite having somehow created or acquired technology that gave him the ability to shape the weather insisted on using it for nothing more than creating a new ice age. For whatever reason.

So there he was, ranting and raving as his machine covered Manhattan Island in slush and ice and snow, and there she was trying to stop it, even as the man continued rambling madly to himself.

Which would probably have been easier if she knew how the machine worked. Despite everything, she had the bizarre notion of asking him how the machine w/

Diana paused, and looked about awkwardly. What had just happened?

And perhaps more to the point, why was it now raining fruit $idewa(*&52462563135

ATTEMPT FAILED

Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation Attempt ! using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana, Queen of the Amazons, and ruler of what they once called Great Britain, now renamed New Paradise Island. She couldn't help but shake the feeling something was wrong.

It wasn't just the fact that her mother had been murdered, or the war with Atlantis that had followed. Or the fact that she, personally, had beheaded the lover of her former betrothed and resented it to Arthur. There was this inescapable feeling that all of what she was doing was wrong. And every time she tried to reign her people in, something always seemed to happen, something that always made the situation just a little bit worse.

She had tried talking to her aunt about the matter, but as so often happened these days she'd been brushed off. And there wasn't exactly anyone else who could talk about it. But now and then there were odd feelings of... something. Like a face she didn't recognise, but felt she should have, names that sounded familiar, as if from a distant dream. And the more she tried to focus on something else, the stronger the feelings got.

Which wasn't much of a help when she was fighting her former lover, in the ruins of London. Even with the gifts the Gods had given her, avoiding that trident of his was proving slightly difficult, especially since Arthur seemed determined to stay near her, no matter what happened.

"I can't believe I ever loved you," she heard the man growl, over the sound of clashing metal, and screams as more of her sisters fought and died for reasons that still weren't making sense.

"You never did," she shot back. Then, there was a noise. An almighty flash and the boom of lightning, and suddenly something clashed into her. A familiar red and gold shape. Captain Thunder. And that over-fed cat of his.

"I was just trying to talk to you," he stated, as they fought. "I was trying to figure out why you would do this."

His hold on her was increasing. Even with her strength, it was still unusually strong. If she had to guess, that scar on his face wasn't the only damage she'd left the last time they'd met.

"But I'm done talking," he stated. Then, before she could try talking to him, something struck him. A strange green glow wrapped around his form. For an instant, h{ trie] yelling, only to suddenly split apart with some force. In the place of her adversary were... children?

She'd been trying to kill children?

*empowered by the wizard Shazam*

Where had that come from? She shook her head, trying to force the strange feelings of deja vu away. Two of the children were trying to stand, ignoring the green magics still wrapped around them, one boy and one gir2. Her aunt was hurrying toward the younger one, drawing her s-

She couldn't move. She tried to move her arm, tried to tell her aunt to stop. This was wrong, this had gone too far. Surely she wasn't g00ng to-

The sword went 5traight through the boy. Lightning began to arc everywhere as he sc*%4£"{85190#35/356

ATTEMPT FAILED

Yggdrasil Log: Loop activation attempt ^ using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Nubia, Princess of the Amazons, daughter of Queen Hippolyta, and the super-heroine known as Wonder Woman.

She wasn't exactly sure why she couldn't remember what she'd been doing up until that point, or why she was in a stadium filled with

people cheering, or even why she was wearing what she was wearing, but the facts were clear. Sh* was a performer, with an audience, and she did have to s^$#

Carefully, trying not to let her confusion show, she stepped up to the microphone, as the crowd began to get eve0 *))der an-£%~{{##

ATTEMPT FAILED

Yggrasil Log: Loop Activation Attempt ~ using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana, princess of the Amazons.

Currently, she was staring at the oceans that surrounded her home of Themyscira. Long had she wondered what strange things lay beyond them, in the wild unknown her fellow Amazons called "Man's World". She so often hoped of seeing it for herself, but she knew her mother would likely disapprove. Why, she didn't know.

After some time of watching the waves lap against the sands, she knew not how long, the peace and quiet was broken by a strange and distant noise. She looked about, and saw nothing, but there were several more noises. She looked up.

Something strange was hurtling towards the beach, belching black smoke and fire as it went. Without even thinking she moved out of the way, as this something slammed with incredible force into the beach, a gout of flame accompanying its final landing.

For some seconds she stared, a mixture of surprise, curiosity and excitement buzzing through her. Cautiously, she rushed over towards it. It looked like metal, but it was far beyond any chariot or any drawing of a boat, and the large protrusion on its side looked, to her mind, like a wing.

*A plane* , an unknown voice in her head said. It was a plane. But how did she know that?

Then she heard a noise, a grunt of pain. There was someone is this strange thing? And from the sound of it, a man. She hurried forward, in case the man was in pain.

"Are you alright?" she asked. The man, clothed in some strange outfit she had never seen before, just shook his head.

"Crashed" he murmured. "Bright light. Don't know what happened."

"I..." she paused, the words he said sounded so unfamiliar, and yet she understood them clearly as she would have another of her sisters. "Can you get out of this thing?"

The man groaned weakly, and then slumped forward. She tried removing the odd straps that held him in place, hoping to pry him loose.

Then his hand moved, and grabbed her by the throat. His hand felt cold, like some horrible fusion of metal and dead flesh. With an unnatural air, the man's head moved to look at her, his eyes glinted with a cruel and soulless light.

" *Target Identified: Amazonian. Location: Found. Enacting Black Swan Protocol 1* - Termination . " And then there he began to make a horrible sou7e534(35#[93675

ATTEMPT FAILED

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Yggdrasil Log: Loop Activation Attempt ? using secondary Primary Anchor Candidate

Her name was Diana Prince. However, most of the world knew her by another name, Wonder Woman, the world's first and only super-soldier, due to a process invented by the now tragically late Professor Hippolyta. Fighting for the Allies in the battlefield of the Second World War, with her trusted friend Etta Candy, and her comrades in the Invaders with her every step of the way.

Presently, she and Etta had made their way to one of the not-exactly inconspicuous lairs of Baroness Paula Von Gunther, one of the Nazis top sciencists, and someone whom Diana had made a personal effort to either thwart or bring over to the Allies' cause.

Slowly, carefully, the two had made their way into the heart of the massive castle Gunther was operating out of, to find... a darkened room. With even greater care, Diana felt for her sword, which so far had proven more than capable of handling whatever abominations Paula had seen fit to throw at them.

"So..." a voice echoed out, "Vonder Voman. And her... gregarious accomplice. You have arrived."

Something sounded wrong with Paula's voice, something Diana couldn't put her finger on.

"Why not come out and face us?" Etta yelled, "'fraid we'll beat you again?"

"AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO ME?!" came the reply. Diana winced. During one of her previous encounters with Paula, she'd accidentally knocked over a vat of some strange chemicals the woman had been developing, chemicals which had apparently damaged the woman's face beyond even her skills to repair.

There was a long pause, before Paula responded with what sounded like a reluctant tone. "No. I just do not have the stomach to watch what's about to happen."

And then light flooded the room, and Diana saw it. Chained to the floor, directly in front of both of them, was a person, their features hidden by a black and green outfit, with only some red hair sticking out of the top of it. For some reason, Diana had the feeling she should have been running.

"This is my final creation," Paula announced. "It is called Genocide."

The figure stood up, sn**ping the chains as if they were barely there, and began moving towards Diana and Etta slowly. Every part of Diana was screaming at her to grab Etta and run.

"God forgive me..." sh% he[rd Paula murmur, before the feedback from her announcer went dead. The creature shrugged off Etta#s attempts to shoot it, and grabbed the young girl. Diana rushed it, only to be instantly back-handed, flying across the rest of the room.

And then, when she landed, she saw the monster's grip on Etta's n*ck increasing, more and more. And then, the creature began to lau$32^&[}/649

ATTEMPT FAILED

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SECONDARY PRIMARY ANCHOR CANDIDATE DEEMED UNVIABLE DUE TO SUCCESSIVE FAILURES

WARNING: BRANCH DATA CORRUPTION AT DANGEROUS LEVELS.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT LOOPING MAY RESULT IN PERMANENT DAMAGE TO BRANCH DATA.

RECOMMENDATION: SET BRANCH TO READ-ONLY PENDING REVIEW BY A HIGHER AUTHORITY

PROCEED? Y / N

Morpheus leaned back in his chair, staring at the readout in front of him. Another failed Loop. Another on top of the several he already had. And this one had cost him another potential Anchor. He stared at the readout on the screen, and waited. Waited for it to change, or for an angry e-mail asking why exactly he hadn't gotten the DC Universe Looping yet.

He could set it now, so clearly. He was going to have to explain to Zeus, or maybe Hera, or possibly Athena, why he couldn't get it Looping, how it seemed to be unwilling to work, and they were going to nod, and talk about how maybe it would be better if maybe it wasn't set to Read-Only for the foreseeable future, and then it would be handed over to someone else, and he'd have *failed* .

He glared at the message on the screen, knowing full well it wouldn't do a damn thing to change what it said.

"Higher Authority" meant Zeus, who would likely do whatever it took to save face and make himself look better while taking whatever option took the least amount of time and effort.

Morpheus kept on glowering. And glowering. And the message still refused to change. He knew what the potential risks where if he didn't set it to read-only. Damage to its data was the best case scenario. Outright destruction of that branch of Yggdrasil was another. And that was utterly unthinkable. No god would be that mad to risk damaging Yggdrasil that badly just out of stubborn pride.

But still... Read-Only. He had said he would get that universe Looping. He'd said, there and then that he'd do it...

So he sat. Finally, when no e-mail alert popped up, Morpheus stormed out of his office. He needed somewhere to think about what he was going to do next.

He was mildly satisfied to find it was raining when he went outside, and raining heavily, which meant no-one was likely to come and bother him. He quickly found a nearby bench.

So he sat, as the rain rained over him, drenching him to the bone, as he thought, and definitely didn't brood. He was thinking. Admittedly, his thoughts kept going to incredibly dark places, like what everyone was likely to say if he gave up. "Look" they would say, "there goes Morpheus, who can't even get one universe Looping, not like Thor, or Nut."

He sat, glowering at the ground. He couldn't work it out. Everything he'd tried so far had failed. He put down one glitch, and another popped up somewhere else, and then two more joined it, taking a good chunk of viable data up.

And here he'd assumed it would be so easy. Just get the Anchor, get them to the end of one Loop, and that would be it, but apparently not. Why did he have to go and choose the most difficult universe possible?

So distracted was Morpheus by his brooding that he didn't notice someone approaching him from behind, or the fact that everything seemed to be getting slightly darker.

"Well, goodness me" came a voice that cut through Morpheus' reverie, "if it isn't Morpheus, the god of dreams himself, having a sulk."

He turned to look at the source of the voice, and almost winced at the sight of his grandmother. "Nyx."

There were a few stories about Nyx, which given her nature was not exactly unexpected. Not helping was that some years ago she had just utterly vanished without a comment or word, under a not inconsiderable cloud. Morpheus had heard some rumours, trying as hard as he did not to listen to them, but there were one or two that caught his attention.

What he did know about her was that the word "shadowy" tended to come up when describing her, due to her tendency to stick to the shadows (or the shadows stuck to her, it was hard to tell), and that she and Zeus had a lot of bad blood between them, something the fool had no intention of letting him forget.

Nyx grinned, "and what a hello is that for your beloved grandmother?" She tutted.

"Honestly. What are gods coming to these days?"

"Failure, it seems" Morpheus stated. His grandmother just shook her head.

"Computer problems driving you loopy?" she grinned. Morpheus turned to stare at her.

"Yes, actually." He paused, staring at a small puddle some feet away. "And I'm not sulking. I'm pondering."

There was a small hum from his grandmother. "If you say so. You're the one sitting out in the rain staring at the ground and looking all forlorn."

Morpheus ignored that. "What are you doing here?" he finally asked.

"Oh" she said casually, her eyes glinting brightly (though given her face was almost always hidden by shadows, and her eyes tended to look like stars, this didn't mean much), "I just came to see how my grandson was getting on, assisting with the restoration of Yggdrasil. And I went to your office, and I wasn't there, but there was a very angry e-mail from Zeus."

Morpheus felt his mood sinking fast. Nyx apparently noticed it. "So, I take it from your dour expression it's all going pretty bad?"

"It..." Morpheus paused, as he tried to think of the best way to describe his current situation, and came up depressingly short. "It is not going well, no."

Nyx hummed, and sat next to him. "Is that so? Well, would it help if I told you that, according to what a little bird told me, a certain Thunder God over in the Asgardian camp has been having trouble getting his universe Looping as well?"

Morpheus stopped, and stared at his grandmother, who was now grinning a grin that would have made Bast proud. "In fact" she continued, "rumour has it that there have been some very loud shouting matches between Thor and Odin over getting his universe

Looping. Apparently, it's as if the Loop itself is being recalcitrant about activating. Isn't that just fascinating?"

Morpheus couldn't believe it. The Marvel Universe was having problems Looping? That was interesting. And then a thought came to him. Even back when he'd first started work, there had been the option of a Fused Loop between the DC and Marvel universes, but he'd declined, back when he thought he could get it Looping on his own. And after that last attempted Fused Loop, that glitch infested hash that had cost him Superman as an Anchor, he'd been incredibly leary of trying another until everything about his universes' coding was fixed. But now... now he couldn't help but wonder.

It had often been said (though exactly by whom was massively unclear) that trying to understand how Yggdrasil worked was likely trying to understand a game where the board and pieces were alive and wanted in on the game, with a rulebook that only listed some of the rules, handed out by a stranger who was grinning far too much to be trustworthy. Even the Admins had very little actual idea as to how and why Yggdrasil worked, though none of them would admit it, but if Morpheus were a guessing sort of god, he'd say Yggdrasil wanted a Fused Loop between the two universes, and was doing everything it could to make sure that happened.

Slowly, a small smile began to creep across Morpheus' face, and without a word he stood up, and began striding off. After a few seconds it turned into a full-on run, but not in the direction of his office, or even Thor's (though he was going to go there). Instead, it was in the direction of someone he'd need first.

He had a plan.

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If anyone ever asked the Olympians about Hephaestus, though no-one ever did, they would have said he was definitely one of the better workers they had. Provided of course they asked one of the Olympians that liked him. If he was asked, Morpheus would have

said that while he didn't know the volcano god, he did admire and respect the man's determination and creativity.

At the moment he entered Hephaestus' office, the god was busy doing... something that required him to be underneath his computer. Apparently he'd heard Morpheus enter, since he spoke up before the god could even speak.

"Whatever it is, I'm busy. It can wait."

Morpheus stared downwards. "I assure you, it cannot."

Whatever Hephaestus was doing, he stopped. Slowly, and with a few missteps, he pulled himself out from underneath his terminal, and stood face to face with Morpheus. That was the idea, at any rate, but given Morpheus had a good two feet worth of height on him even without Hephaestus' limp, it didn't work.

"Huh. Morpheus." There was a moment of silence as Hephaestus stared thoughtfully at him. "Having problems with a Loop?"

"How did y-" Hephaestus just chuckled. It was utterly absent of any humour.

"Because no-one ever visits me. Not of their own free will, at any rate. They only visit because they've got a problem that for whatever reason they just can't fix, and then they remember that I exist." His expression shifted, "only now, with more and more universes Looping, there are more and more problems cropping up, and the more there are the more I'm needed, and the more I'm needed, the more work begins to pile up, so unless a branch of Yggdrasil is about to snap off entirely, I'm still busy."

Morpheus stared down at the smith god, and Hephaestus stared right back. This required a change of tack, not easy for Morpheus.

"I..." he started, trying to get the unfamiliar words to make sense, "require your assistance."

One of Hephaestus' eyebrows raised. "You need my help?" he asked, sounding almost amused. Morpheus grimaced. He didn't want to go further, he ju-

The words "read-only" flashed vividly in his mind. He forced his pride back down and nodded.

"Yes" he barely managed to get out. Hephaestus stared in what was either alarm or shock.

"Well that might just be a first" he said. Slowly, he turned and made his way over to his desk. When he reached it, he looked back at Morpheus. "You know, no-one's actually *asked* me for help before? Oh, they'll burst in and demand assistance, or bargain, or cajole, but actually ask?"

He shook his head, then stared at Morpheus. "Must be pretty dire, then."

"It... Yes." Morpheus paused again. "I have as yet been unable to get the DC Universe Looping. Each Looping attempt so far has failed. Some... in more unusual fashions than others."

A mounting look of alarm was growing on Hephaestus's face. "It has cost me two potential Anchor candidates so far, and the recommendation is my universe be set to Read-Only."

"And why haven't you?" Hephaestus asked, his voice incredibly quiet. Not that Morpheus could really blame him. Failing bad enough that not one but two Anchors had been rendered unusable? It was unheard of. Frankly, it was amazing the Friendly Ones weren't smashing the door in and dragging him to wherever it was they put Admins who screwed up that badly at that very moment.

"Because he's too proud" someone declared. Both gods jolted, and turned to look at its source, which was Nyx, sitting in a corner. For once, the usual shadows that seemed to cling to her were barely present, meaning her features were visible. Unsurprisingly for

someone who didn't see much sunlight, her skin was incredibly pale, and her hair the same colour as the night sky.

Hephaestus's gaze moved between Nyx and the door. "How did you get in without me noticing?" he asked. Nyx smirked.

"Oh, I have my ways." Her eyes flickered. Hephaestus turned to look at Morpheus, who just gave him a look that while not exactly sympathetic at least indicated he was just as confused. Nyx, meanwhile, continued onwards.

"My grandson is just too proud to admit he might possibly have failed at something, even if setting this universe to Read-Only means there's a chance to try again, because it still means he had to give up." She sighed wistfully. "So unlike his father."

Her smile returned, "and it is admittedly a good attitude to have when dealing with a Loop whose inhabitants define themselves by routinely overcoming impossible odds, but it's not such a good idea when there's no chance of winning on your own."

Morpheus gritted his teeth, "I know." He stressed, trying to avoid adding a "now".

Nyx's smile utterly vanished. "Do you?" she asked, not sounding entirely convinced. "Good."

Her gaze flitted briefly toward Hephaestus at that. Morpheus ignored it, and turned back to the forge god.

"Anyway" he stated as firmly as possible, "I do require your assistance in this matter. Do I have it?"

Hephaestus gave the question some thought. "Well... you did ask (sort of), so..." he hummed, and nodded, "yes. I'll help. Heck, I'd do it for free, just for the sheer novelty value alone."

"Good" Morpheus stated. There was the tiniest cough from Nyx's corner of the room, and he turned back to look at his grandmother, staring expectantly at him. He turned back to Hephaestus. "... thank you."

"Right." Morpheus nodded. Hephaestus nodded.

"Where is your office, anyhow?" the inventor asked.

"I'll show you" Nyx chimed in. "Wouldn't be much of a night god if I didn't help someone find out where to go, now would I?"

Hephaestus nodded. "Right. I'll just fetch some things I might need..."

As he did this, Nyx turned to look at Morpheus, "are you still here?"

Quickly, and quietly, Morpheus took off, heading in the general direction of Thor's office. As he did, he could still hear Nyx's voice.

"So, my dear, I understand you and your father don't get on well..."

"Yes?"

"Interesting. I think we should talk..."

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Finding Thor had been easy enough. Getting Thor's attention, much less so. Talking him around the idea, slightly more. However, with that most universal of all the godly currencies, bribery, Morpheus succeeded.

On returning to Morpheus' office, they found Hephaestus, focused intently at the screen of Morpheus's terminal, so much so he apparently didn't notice Morpheus and Thor's arrival into the room. His grandmother was sitting in a corner, engrossed with a remote terminal. He decided it best to leave her be, and looked back towards Hephaestus.

"How is it going?" Hephaestus jolted slightly, before looking upward at Morpheus.

"Just doing some checks, trying to fix what I can. But no promises there, I'm afraid." His eyes moved towards Thor. "I suppose I should probably check your Loop as well before we get started."

Thor looked at Hephaestus, then down at his remote terminal. "I... yes. That might be a good idea. It's kinda banged up a bit."

"'Banged up'?" Nyx commented, not even looking up from her terminal. Thor harrumphed to himself.

"A lot of data on the baseline is badly corrupted, for one reason or another. Nothing too serious, but I did try patching things together with some data from some variants, to see if that fixed anything." He stared down at the terminal. "It's been a bit hit-and-miss."

"You did what?" Hephaestus asked. He murmured something under his breath, before glaring in Thor's general direction, "never mind. Just give me a minute and I'll look over it as well."

And with that he went straight back to work. It was eerie how different he was while at work, utterly calm, and with a confidence he hadn't been carrying before. It was almost like he was a different being altogether.

For several minutes, the only sound in the room was that of Hephaestus's fingers moving across the keyboard at incredible speeds. Until there was a distant rumbling sound from outside, quickly followed by the doors bursting open. A towering figure who was practically trembling with barely restrained fury, glaring at practically everyone in the room. It was Zeus.

" *Well,* " thought Morpheus, " *Crap.* "

"WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!" he bellowed in the general direction of Morpheus, "no, don't tell me. You're trying to get

that branch Looping. Even though you've failed repeatedly. Even though you were told, *ordered* in fact, to stop."

Morpheus just glared at Zeus, "Yes" he said calmly. "I am. I said I would get it Looping, and I meant it. And unlike *some people* in this room, I keep my promises."

There was a noise from Hephaestus, sounding incredibly like a strangled laugh. Zeus's face contorted with rage, but after several seconds he managed to fight it down. A glassy smile appeared on his face. "Is that so?" he asked, with the sort of calm found in the eye of the storm. His eyes moved toward Hephaestus, and his smile managed to get worse.

"And you think one tiny little universe-"

"Two" Morpheus corrected him.

"Hey, don't drag me into this" Thor muttered quickly.

" *Two* universes, are worth taking Hephaestus off other more important projects, even when you have no guarantee that whatever you're doing will work?"

This would have been a perfect time for Hephaestus to say something, or indeed anything, instead he just remained quiet, glowering at Zeus. Thor, meanwhile, just remained quiet, if only to avoid bringing any inter-office politics on the rest of his pantheon.

Morpheus grit his teeth. "It will work. All we require is one attempt, with some help from Hephaestus to work out some problems we've been having."

"No" Zeus snapped. "You've already failed to get this universe Looping, repeatedly. You're not likely to succeed with one more chance."

Morpheus stood his ground. "I'm still going to try."

"No you aren't." Zeus prodded a large, meaty finger into Morpheus's chest, "now get this through your head: I'm in charge here, and when I tell you to do something, *you. Do. It* . I don't give a damn who your grandmother i-"

"Is that so?" At those words from Nyx, all colour quickly drained from Zeus's face, and he slowly turned to look at the quickly approaching Nyx. Her entire body was obscured by shadows, save her eyes, which were focused entirely on Zeus.

"Nyx." Zeus stated. At this, she began to smile in the sort of way usually reserved for sharks.

"Zeus, you old dog. How *absolutely lovely to see you here."*

"I... didn't know you were here..." he audibly gulped. "Or that you were still... around."

If anyone had been looking in the direction of Hephaestus, they would have noticed the utterly astonished look on his face. Probably Zeus almost never lost his look of unrestrained egotism, even when he was caught with his pants down (which was sometimes unpleasantly literal with him), or when he was caught lying, or doing something unimaginably selfish and stupid. But the look on his face at that moment was pure, unadulterated terror.

"It's been a long time, hasn't it?" Nyx said. Zeus didn't respond. He looked like he was trying to flee, but was finding himself rooted to the floor. As soon as she was near enough, one of Nyx's hands shot out of the darkness and clamped around Zeus's wrist.

"Come. We have *so much* to talk about." And with that, and a seemingly total lack of effort on her part, she dragged him out of the room. Silence fell on the room for several minutes after that.

"Okay, that was... kinda weird, but also sort of cool" Thor eventually said. Slowly, Hephaestus and Morpheus nodded.

"What was that all about, anyway?" Hephaestus asked. Morpheus just stared blankly.

"Your guess is as good as mine" he admitted. There was a disappointed noise from Hephaestus.

"Back to work then, I suppose." And with that, he began typing again. After a few minutes of silence, Nyx and Zeus reappeared. Nyx was still smiling in an incredibly unnerving fashion. Zeus, meanwhile, was holding his arm and wincing, and it didn't escape anyone's notice that he was limping.

"Good news" Nyx declared, "Zeus and I have *discussed* the situation, and he's decided to give you the chance you need."

Her eyes flitted toward Zeus, who was blatantly not paying attention. She jabbed him harshly in the ribs with an elbow, and he nodded vigorously.

"Yes. I may have been hasty in my judgement." He quickly looked about the room, and then tried to straighten himself up. "And now I remember I have to return to my office. Sort out my itinerary. Leave you be."

And before anyone could make any comment about that, he turned and hobbled out of the room. After a few seconds Hephaestus winced.

"I don't know what you just did, but I'm probably going to pay for that, you know. He'll probably give me a difficult universe and try to get it Looping as a punishment." He shook his head, "he's not subtle."

"Do I want to know what you did to change his mind?" Morpheus asked, cautiously. Nyx's smile utterly vanished.

"Oh, that. I just reminded him of a few... certain facts."

"Such as?" Thor asked.

"That he can shoot all the lighting he wants, but I was here long before him, I was here when he was a little boy hiding from his father, and I'm going to be here after him." She stopped for a moment.

"As far as I'm concerned, he's still the little boy who's afraid of the dark. And I am the dark."

Morpheus resisted the urge to bury his face in his hands, and turned to look at Hephaestus. "Are we nearly there yet?"

"Almost, just got a few things to go over." He looked up briefly, "nice work with the Anti-Monitor's coding, by the way."

Morpheus nodded. "Thank you. I felt it was best to make sure he was contain before anything... went wrong. Not that it saved my second choice of Anchor during one of her Loop attempts, though."

"Second?" Thor repeated. "Huh. I've only had the one Anchor candidate so far."

Morpheus stared at him for a moment, with all the cold fury he could muster, before a question occurred to him. "Who is your Anchor by the way?"

Thor beckoned him over to his terminal. Morpheus did so, and then nodded. "Ah. Of course, it would be him. I might have known."

"Who did you think it was?" Thor asked. Morpheus paused.

"Captain America. He would have been my choice." Thor nodded at this.

"Yeah, he'd have been a good choice, too." After a few seconds pause, Thor spoke again. "Who were your first and second choices for Anchor, by the way?"

"Superman, followed by Wonder Woman."

"Huh" was Thor's response.

"'huh'?"

"Thought you would've gone with Batman" the Thunder god admitted. Morpheus stared at him, and when Thor didn't grin or say he was joking, he frowned in confusion.

" *Why?* " A totally bewildered Morpheus asked.

Thor looked confused. "I dunno. Just thought it would be Batman."

"Same here" Hephaestus admitted from the other side of the room, "thought it would be Batman as well. Because, well... Batman."

Morpheus glanced at Thor and Hephaestus, and shook his head. "No. I can't put my finger on why" he glanced in the direction of Nyx, who was back to looking at her remote terminal, "but for some reason, the thought of Batman as Anchor just... didn't appeal to me."

Thor and Hephaestus exchanged glances at this, but said absolutely nothing. Then Thor spoke up again, "so, why Superman and Wonder Woman?" Morpheus stared blankly (which given his eyes were completely pitch-black didn't mean much).

"I mean, I can get Superman, but why Wonder Woman?"

"Because he's the god of dreams" Nyx spoke up, "he was never going to choose someone like Batman. After all, Batman's the stuff of nightmares. And nightmares are his brother's domain. And as for the rest of them? An alien police officer? A king of the seas? A man who can run really fast? Nothing truly spectacular there. But a man who fell from the heavens and does only good? A woman given life by the gods? The stuff of legends, so naturally he'd be drawn right to them."

She paused for a moment. "Incidentally, who would be your next choice for Anchor?"

"Ideally, Captain Marvel" Morpheus muttered.

"Ah." Nyx smiled, "well he'd be a good choice as well."

"He *would* , but alas his data is incredibly badly corrupted, and it would take some time to fix. And I do not have that time."

"Don't look at me" Hephaestus supplied, "I was already working overtime before this, just trying to keep everyone else's servers from melting."

"Including Aphrodite?" Thor asked. Hephaestus paused at the mention of his wife, whose infamous temperament and attitude was practically a legend in it's own right, as was the fact that she didn't think highly of her husband. Indeed, the only one who didn't seem to know this was Hephaestus himself. Or if he did, he was in the greatest bout of denial ever witnessed.

"Almost everyone's" Hephaestus corrected himself, quietly. Morpheus frowned.

"Is it ready yet?" Hephaestus shook his head.

"Not yet. Bear in mind, there is a lot of damage here. It doesn't help that both universes were rushed into action, by the looks of it. Basically we're performing the metaphorical equivalent of patching a nuclear reactor together with duct tape." He looked up at Morpheus again, "assuming you just want something that can survive a activation Loop, and plan to fix the rest up later."

Morpheus nodded. Hephaestus winced. "Then this might not be pretty. I mean, speaking objectively, I'm brilliant. But even with the best coding, with a rush job like this I can only really give them a fighting chance."

"How much of a chance?" asked Thor. There was a painful pause before Hephaestus responded.

"One."

" *One percent of a chance?* " Thor asked incredulously. Hephaestus shook his head.

"No, no, no. They've got one chance. Actual percentage is probably going to be about fifty-ish percent. To start with." He paused, glancing at the screen, before back to Morpheus. "And they are only being threatened with Read-Only status. It's not exactly do-or-die for either of them. (Even if Yggdrasil really does need these universes Looping.)"

Morpheus glared at the floor, the thought of Zeus burning in his mind. "I said I would get them Looping" he stated. "And I have every intention of doing it. No matter how long it takes."

"Really doesn't take after his father, this one" Nyx said, "all serious and gloomy and focused. And not half-asleep all the time."

"I agree," Thor cut in before Morpheus could say anything to her, "about the read-only thing. But if something goes wrong, I can always try again later on, or ask for an appeal."

Morpheus said nothing. Even before his grandmother's actions, he seriously doubted Zeus would have allowed him that chance, not without making things supremely difficult for him.

"Is it ready yet?" Morpheus asked, wearily. Hephaestus tapped away at the keyboard for several minutes.

"Now it is" he eventually said, before looking to Thor, "just give me a minute to look over his universe and we can start."

"Except someone still doesn't have an Anchor" Nyx pointed out. Morpheus turned to stare at her, then back to his screen, then back to his grandmother.

"Why are you still here?" he asked. Nyx just smiled.

"I want to see how this activation Loop turns out." Her expression turned dark, "After all, us retirees don't have much to do, anyway."

After a few seconds her smile returned, "anyway! Anchor. Who's your choice?"

Morpheus moved over toward his terminal, and stared. After a few seconds he realised Nyx was standing behind him. He ignored it.

"So, which baseline are you going for?" she asked. He frowned.

"I was hoping to go for their post-second Crisis history, but I can't use that one. The data is just… I don't know if it's corrupted or just missing, but I cannot access it at all."

"Alright," Nyx said, "so... Anchor candidates. Well, Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman and Captain Marvel are all shot, so that still leaves you with a lot of choice."

"Except we need someone who can stay emotionally stable, so most of the founding members of the Justice League are out." He also noted to himself that it also meant Batman was out. He tried not to let it show.

"And someone who can stay *alive* , which I understand is a problem with these superhero types."

Morpheus nodded. "So, I want someone sane, and stable, and who stays alive..."

He had barely scrolled down the list when he came upon one name. And with all the speed of a light being switched on, it dawned on him. "Yes. He'll do. He'll do *nicely* ."

He looked over to Hephaestus, who was working away at Thor's terminal. "How long will it take you to begin?" he asked.

"Not long" Hephaestus said, "for whatever reason, the Marvel universe seems to have less issues than your universe. Though

patching together data from the variants isn't helping at all."

Thor just muttered something under his breath at that. Time passed. Fortunately, as Hephaestus said, the Marvel branch was in a far better shape than the DC one, data-wise, so it only took a long time.

"Alright" Hephaestus said, once he was done, "you're ready to go. But I might stick around, just in case anything unforeseen happens."

Morpheus nodded, and made his way over to his terminal, and sat down. Then he saw the message on screen.

TANDEM RUN WITH LOOP DESIGNATED 'MARVEL' AUTHORIZED BY LOOP ADMINISTRATOR NYX.

He turned to look at Nyx, who on noticing he was staring tried to suppress a smirk. He looked back to the screen.

BEGIN LOOP ACTIVATION ATTEMPT? Y/N

He looked back over to Thor, "any last words before we do this?" he asked. Thor shook his head.

"Not yet."

"Very well, then" he said, before doing one last minute check, "here goes something..."

Y:\ Y

BEGINNING LOOP...

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Attempt 1) Having Anchors willing to sacrifice their lives can, on occasion, backfire spectacularly

Attempt 2) This attempt inspired by one of the Mega Man X Loop attempts (the one where Double goes all jello). And, oh no, the glitches are spreading to the numbering system.

Attempt 3) Sudden Loop Bluescreen. Oh dear.

Attempt 4) Minister Blizzard is in fact one of Wonder Woman's enemies. And now she seems to have wound up in Ice's place.

Attempt 5) This Loop has encountered a fatal event and has had to shut down. Please reboot universe to continue.

Attempt 6) Nubia, Wonder Woman's black sister, who has never been Wonder Woman in regular continuity, but has on Earth-23. Some say she looks amazingly like a certain singer… (next they'll be saying that Superman is the president!)

Attempt 7) Black Swan being a double reference, to the Silver Swans, and the Black Swan theory, where events that shouldn't occur but have, that have an extreme impact, and make sense in hindsight. Someone creating a cyborg and throwing it at the Amazons to kill them all? Makes perfect sense in hindsight. Probably.

Attempt 8) Hold on… that's Captain America's backstory! … also, Genocide. Basically, take Wonder Woman's corpse, fill it full of evil and let it loose on the innocents.